

Lewis Evans Map of Pennsylvania (1749)

ANTON'S WILDERNESS

TENS OF THOUSANDS of wilderness acres within an easy day's drive of tens of millions of people is truly remarkable. But that's just what we have along the leading edge of the Appalachian Mountains north of Harrisburg. Several factors account for this wilderness area, most notable being the fact that after being largely exploited of its marketable resources, nobody wanted it.

By Jim Rice

illustrations by the author

The Game Commission began purchasing much of this land in the 1940s and designated it State Game Land 211. Another large, connecting parcel is owned by the Harrisburg Water Authority and is left in virtually a pristine state.

Rich in natural beauty, the area today holds tremendous historical interest, too. Years ago the land was an adversary that had to be conquered for its timber and mineral wealth. Lands were cleared, exploited and then abandoned — a story repeated over and over. Most of today's trails incorporate features of this history. They connect wagon tracks or inclined planes, while old stone foundations and collapsed mine entrances dot the landscape.

Think of the first human being to see this area. How long after the retreat of the glaciers in what's now northern Pennsylvania did he arrive? We know little of his looks, language, social customs and religious beliefs. We have found his stone tools

In 1743 cartographer Lewis Evans and botanist John Bartram were guided by the Indian interpreter Conrad Weiser on a journey from Philadelphia to central New York. Evans' map illustrates a path from the Indian village of Shamokin, now Sunbury, through St. Anthony's Wilderness. Weiser traveled the path on his many visits to Shickellamy, the Iroquois vicegerent at Shamokin. Shickellamy, a Cayuga sent by the Iroquois (about 1742) to oversee the various tribes, resided there until his death in December 1748. Likewise, Iroquois embassies from the Six Nations, by way of Shamokin, traveled the path to Weiser's home near present day Womelsdorf and on to Philadelphia. Shamokin was the Indian capital of Pennsylvania until its abandonment in 1756.

and weapons; we know he was a hunter. Did he hunt mastodon and caribou in the valley? The culture of the primitive people was based on wildlife. Leather and stone was the staple of the their society and for centuries thereafter.

The Europeans' arrival, however, changed that forever. The old Indian paths are all but forgotten. On Third Mountain, however, is an obscure trail, unmarked and difficult to follow. One section is exposed to the winds and the forest litter is gone, the ground bare. There, the passage of man and animal has worn a shallow groove in the rock and soil. Standing on that centuries old trail one can easily drift into the past and imagine an Indian hunter or courier approaching.

Today, the Appalachian Trail is the major trail in this area, winding its way along a mountain spine, descending,

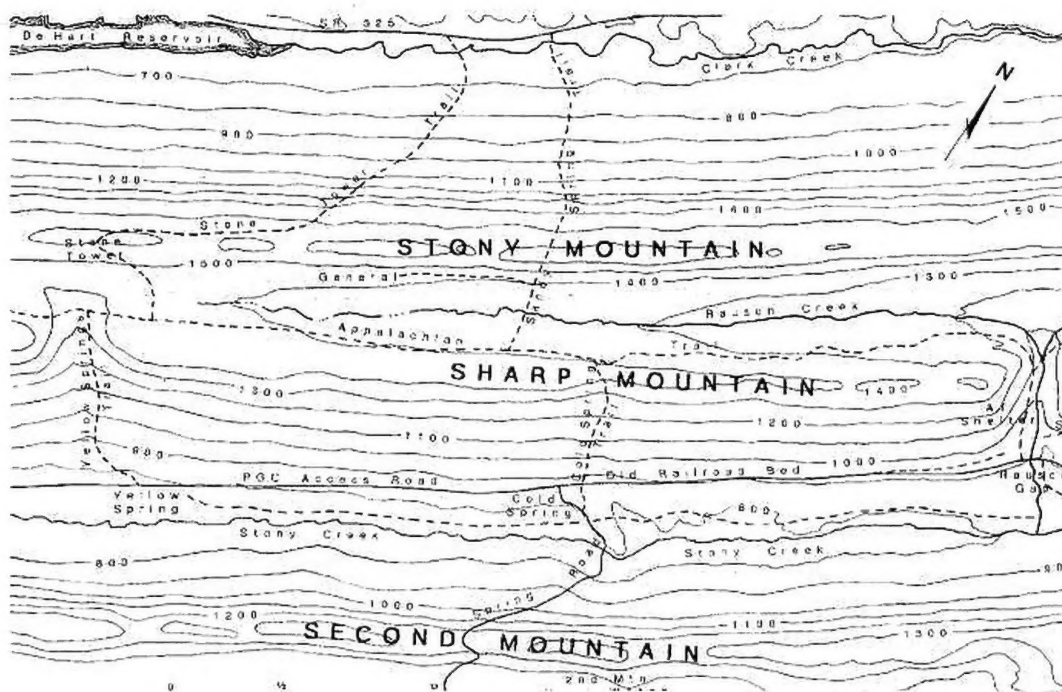
crossing a water gap, then climbing to the crest of a mountain again. The AT is a white man's copy of an Indian path, but merely recreational. Although some mountains had to be crossed, Indian paths tended to be more level and direct. The paths flowed through the gaps akin to the water, but above and dry, taking advantage of the terrain. Many Indian routes have evolved from foot path to wagon road to modern highway.

Among the first whites to lodge with the Indians and describe their customs and character in diaries were the religious missionaries. These explorers possessed courage, uncompromised devotion to their work and integrity, all qualities that permitted them to move freely among the tribes and record what they saw.

Count Nicholas van Zinzendorf, founder of the renewed Moravian church, made three journeys into Indian country during his brief visit in the colony of Pennsylvania. In 1742, on the third expedition and guided by Conrad Weiser, the group followed the route indicated later on Lewis Evans' map of 1749. Like others of that time, Zinzendorf named everything he saw, touched or crossed over. He is credited with naming their settlement, Bethlehem, on Christmas Eve, 1741. On his journey with Weiser, Zinzendorf named the present-day Mahantango Creek "Benigna's Creek," in honor of his daughter. Mahanoy Creek was "Liembach's Creek," named for a fellow traveler. Spangenberg, a Moravian bishop, was the name given to the present-day Shamokin Mountain. And to honor the wife of Bishop Spangenberg, Zinzendorf named Shamokin Creek, "Eva Creek."

And evidently, Count Zinzendorf named the first ridges and valleys of the Appalachians as "Anton's Wilderness," for Anton





Seyffert, a friend and fellow missionary. Seyffert was a member of the first Moravian group to arrive in the British colonies on the ship, *Two Brothers*, in 1735. A Moravian traveling this same path later wrote in his journal:

" . . . By two o'clock we had crossed the mountain, and struck the Swatara; thence through Anton's Wilderness to the Kittochinny Hills by sun down . . . "

Narrative of Moravian Bishop Cammerhof (1748)

What is found on Lewis Evans' map of 1749 and also on William Scull's map of 1775 is "St. Anthony's Wilderness," an English derivative. Let's give this name to the count, none of his other names stuck.

" . . . bearing resemblance to the bed of a mighty torrent . . . we see no vegetation; for no soil exists between the interstices of the rocks; while the rushing or "rattling" of the stream is heard many feet below . . . locally known as "the Devil's Race Course . . . "

Richard C. Taylor (1840)

The valleys within Anton's Wilderness are underlaid with soft, erodible shales and siltstones. Sometimes they are difficult to see because the narrow valleys are blanketed with boulders toppled from the adjacent ridges. The mountaintops consist of jagged spines of the more erosion resistant coarse-grained sandstone and conglomerate. Extreme freeze and thaw cycles during the Ice Age accelerated erosion. These conditions caused natural quarrying along the ridge crests. Huge slabs of rock were toppled and slid down the mountain slopes. The finest example of this geologic process is the Devils Race Course, a boulder field approximately 3,500 feet long and 120 feet wide between Sharp and Stony mountains, west of the Rattling Run Gap.

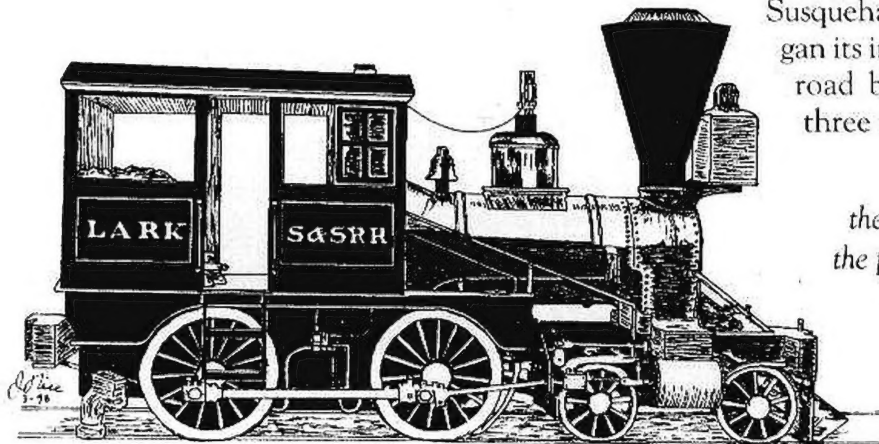


" . . . About the year 1802, it is stated that two boat loads of the coal obtained from about a mile east of the point, were sent down the river to Harrisburg and to Baltimore on trial, as it was a novelty, and was ascertained to be bituminous . . . "

Richard C. Taylor, Pres. of the Board of Directors Dauphin and
Susquehanna Coal Company (1840)

Coal, and the company searching for it, would change the valley forever. The Dauphin and Susquehanna Coal Company was incorporated in 1826 by an act of the Pennsylvania Legislature. Out-of-state financiers provided the funds and the company was empowered to build either a canal or railroad along Stony Creek.

When the Dauphin and Susquehanna Coal Company began its investigation, there was no road beyond the schoolhouse three miles east of Dauphin.



" . . . We are, therefore, still without the power of communication between the Susquehanna at one end and Mount Eagle at the other,

except by very circuitous routes; so that we can reach Philadelphia, 116 miles, in less time than we can pass by any carriage road leading from Port Lyon (Dauphin) to Mount Eagle (Schuylkill County) . . . "

In 1840 the railroad between the Rattling Run mines and the dam in Dauphin was completed. A mining operation was concentrated at Rattling Run Gap, and more than two hundred trial shafts were dug. Two drifts, or tunnels, the Reliance and the Perseverance, were active. An inclined plane was constructed to transport the coal from the top of the mountain to the railroad below. Downstream, a reservoir was built and a large saw mill was nearing completion at Ellendale.

" . . . The accidental fact of there existing no road down Stony Creek valley, and the otherwise utterly impracticable nature of the ground, has fortunately led to the preservation of the timber there. At the present time, therefore, it has the reputation of being the most valuable white oak valley remaining in the country . . . "



In 1850, the railroad was extended to Rausch Gap, connecting all the operations: Ellendale, Rattling Run, Yellow Springs, Cold Spring and Rausch Gap.

"The Dauphin Coal Company have finished their railroad in the most substantial manner with H rail, of the best quality, so that it is said to be the equal to any 20 miles in the State. The western terminus is at the town of Dauphin, 8 miles above Harrisburg, where the company have a basin and large depot, constructed to ship, by the Susquehanna State Canal, any reasonable quantity of coal to market. The works were finished late in the autumn, but in time to send over 4000 tons to market . . . they will commence their regular trade with the opening of the Susquehanna Canal, early in March . . . "

The Daily American, March, 1851

Early in 1854, the line was open to the Reading Railroad at Auburn in Schuylkill County. The Dauphin and Susquehanna, in conjunction with the Reading, proposed to carry freight from Harrisburg to Philadelphia 20 per cent cheaper than the Pennsylvania Railroad. The route was 20 miles longer, but the D&S claimed it would deliver in one-third less time." This great difference in cost and expedition is undoubtedly owing to superior management," supposed the *Democratic Union* in April 1854.

	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	April.	May.
Pass, & Ex.,	\$250	\$1477	\$1932	\$2282	\$2870
Freight,	62	1183	1176	1800	3294
Coal,	939	655	2176	2185	2169
Total,	\$1251	\$3315	\$5284	\$6267	\$8333

"Dauphin and Susquehanna Rail Road - The *Miner's Journal* publishes the following statement of earnings of this road, which was opened through, on the 1st of February:"

Berks and Schuylkill Journal June, 1854

The water from the Virtuous or Cold Spring was long believed to have healing qualities, but access to the spring was difficult. The arrival of the Dauphin and Susquehanna Coal Company, however, changed that.

" . . . At an early period, even prior to the revolution, an order from the court of Lancaster county directed a survey to be made of a road leading from Lebanon, through Indian Creek valley, to the "Virtuous Spring," and this road was subsequently directed to be completed. It was, however, not finished further than to the Second mountain; but measures have been taken to carry the order into effect, by completing the road to the Cold Spring. This will assist in opening a communication to that part of the estate."

Unlike the mining towns of Yellow Springs and Rausch Gap on either side, Cold Spring went on to be developed and promoted as a resort. A hotel complex was built, and two watercolors, dated 1851 and donated to the Lebanon County Historical Society, depict the hotel and bath house.

It seemed to be the best of times, but the Dauphin and Susquehanna Coal Company was in financial distress.

Dauphin and Susquehanna R.R.



FOURTH OF JULY EXCURSIONS!

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, that on Independence Day no coal or freight trains will be run on this road; and instead of the regular passenger train, there will be TWO EXCURSION TRAINS, doubling the road from both ends.

When the company failed to make payments of interest on its bonds, it was forced to sell its properties in 1859 by the Supreme Court. In its place, the Schuylkill and Susquehanna Railroad

Company was organized, with all the powers and privileges previously granted to the defunct coal company. The new company continued operation, but the dreams of mineral wealth had faded. Once thought to be abundant, the marginal amount

of coal turned mining towns to ghost towns. Cold Spring, however, continued as a summer retreat on the line of the Schuylkill and Susquehanna Railroad into the early 1900s.

Today, all that remains at Cold Spring are the foundations of the resort structures. Shards of thick glass are found scattered throughout the estate, remains of bottles used to ship the spring water to various markets by rail.

The old mainline Dauphin and Susquehanna Railroad bed is now a Game Commission access road. It can be traversed with a bicycle to the various points of historical interest in the Stony Creek valley.

Traces of the siding at Yellow Springs can be seen today, where empty cars were loaded. The Yellow Springs Trail leads the visitor up Sharp Mountain. The trail includes the bed of an inclined plane, where cars loaded with coal were lowered to a breaker and the railroad for shipment. At the summit, the Yellow Springs Trail intersects the Appalachian Trail. Along the AT east of this point are foundations where housing was provided for the mining force. A blue-blazed trail leads north to a stone tower and foundation at a collapsed mine entrance near the crest of Stony Mountain. The tower was a component of the mine head frame, and a hoisting engine rested beside it.

Rausch Gap can be divided into four areas, using the intersection of the creek and the railroad at the Rausch Creek bridge as the center.

North and west of the bridge is the Appalachian Trail and the Rausch Gap shelter. Allow

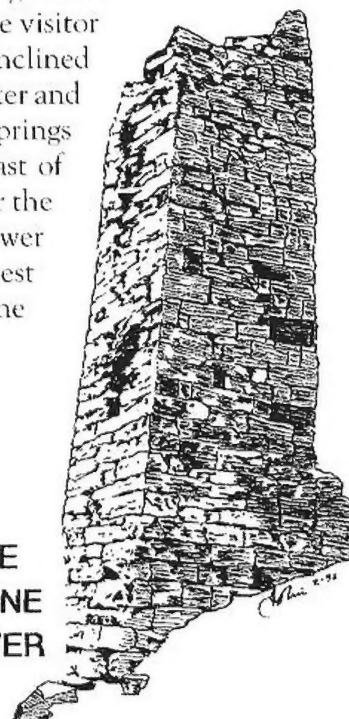
ANTON'S WILDERNESS COLD SPRINGS



ANNUALLY A GROUP OF
PEOPLE INTERESTED IN
GOD'S GREAT OUT OF DOORS
RETURN TO THIS SPOT
WHERE ON OCT. 21, 1934
THE KABOB HIKING CLUB
OF HARRISBURG AND VICINITY
WAS FOUNDED

RATTLING RUN
UNFORTUNATELY, THIS VENERABLE PLAQUE
HAS BEEN USED FOR TARGET PRACTICE

THE STONE TOWER



enough time to sit and read the entries in the AT logbook, perhaps adding a bit of insight. The Rausch Gap colliery and railroad sidings were located in this area.

North and east, the dwellings of the company supervisors overlook the carpenter and engine shop near the mainline. An open well remains, and higher on Sharp Mountain, above the foundations, is the bed of a railroad siding. The bridge abutments for this siding remain at Rausch Creek. The siding continues along the south slope of Sharp Mountain to the remains of a breaker at Gold Mine.

South and west was the major residential section. Foundations of row houses

can be found. A watercolor, dated 1851 and on display at the Stoy Museum in Lebanon, depicts the company housing. A

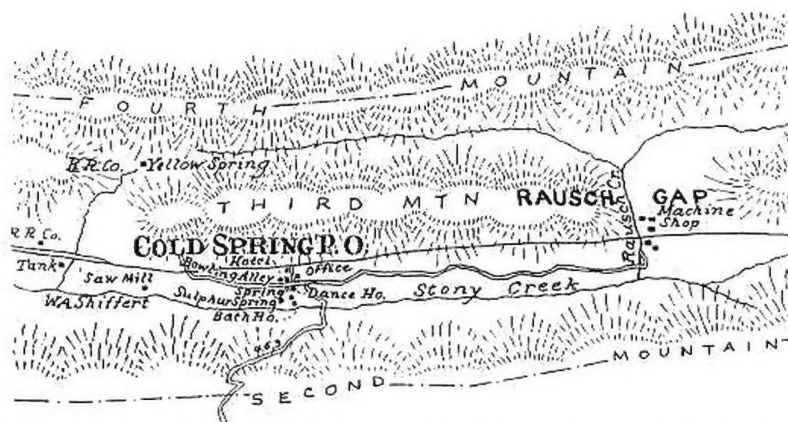
well filled with debris and the wagon track leading to Cold Spring completes the area.

South and east along the mainline railroad bed is

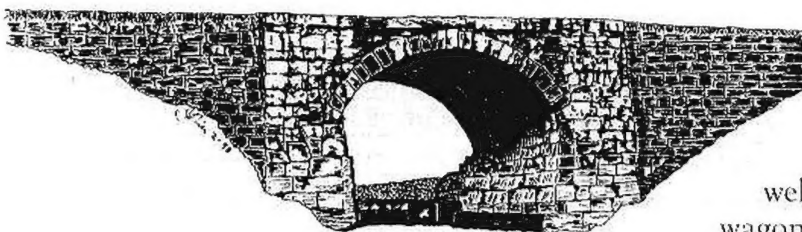
the foundation of a turntable and roundhouse. Metal shavings, turned from a lathe, can be found on the ground. House foundations and a large L-shaped foundation exist in this quadrant. The Appalachian Trail continues through this area, and near it is a well filled with debris. Three tombstones remain in a cemetery on the southeast fringe of the community.

Space does not permit me to relate all the history of Anton's Wilderness. There is, though, a certain untidiness to the history of the valley. Everyone loves a mystery. Whether you find an arrowhead or a piece of hand-forged iron, both are relics beckoning you into the past.

Wildlife abounds. Various food plots throughout the game lands present a chance to view deer and, if you're real lucky, coyote and bear. Do not be afraid to leave the beaten path and explore; you will find many hidden treasures. One early March day I watched a coyote family at play. The pups wrestled with each other and became quite vocal. The mother watched the trails, knowing

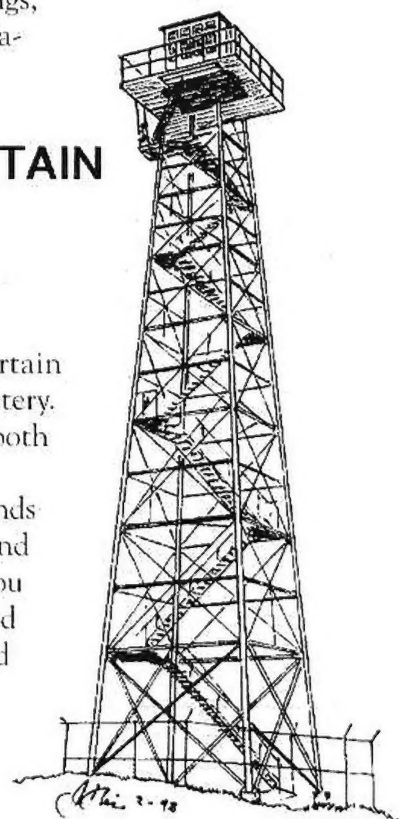


Frederick W. Beers County Atlas of Lebanon, Pennsylvania (1875)



RAUSCH CREEK BRIDGE

STONY MOUNTAIN LOOKOUT TOWER





where danger might appear. I was downwind, screened by brush, enjoying every moment through my binoculars.

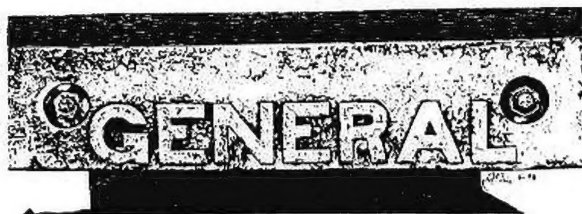
Use your ears. In June the hooded warbler's loud melodious song will help you find him. Nesting preference is dense brushy undergrowth, and although difficult to observe, viewing them through your binoculars on a sunny day is worth the effort. The hooded warbler's need for large tracts of wooded area may cause it to play an important role as an indicator species of environmental change.

While nearing the summit of Stony Mountain, pause on the steep slope and listen for the throaty croak of a raven. Ravens have become more common in recent years, more adaptable to human activity than previously thought. Superb fliers, ravens use this skill to harass much larger raptors in flight.

One cold, windy overcast day in early November, I was turkey hunting when a large boisterous group of crows gathered on the crest of Sharp Mountain. I hurried over to find the object of their ire. I assumed the crows' interest centered on a great horned owl. With the wind concealing my approach through the laurel, I crept up and found, on the ground, beneath the noisy crows, a golden eagle, its long wings curved, mantling something. To be so close to this splendid bird of prey was a once in a lifetime experience. Powerful wings lifted the bird into the air and out over Stony Valley, and the crows scattered. What had brought the eagle and the crows together on Sharp Mountain was hunger and the remains of a successful bow hunt, fresh entrails. Curiosity had brought me, an intruder on the scene, but a fortunate

one. I have hunted gobblers and bucks successfully on this ground, watched black bear, bobcat, beaver and coyote. Expect the unexpected.

The area is used by many nonhunters, and a short drive from Philadelphia and New Jersey allows weekenders to hike and camp along

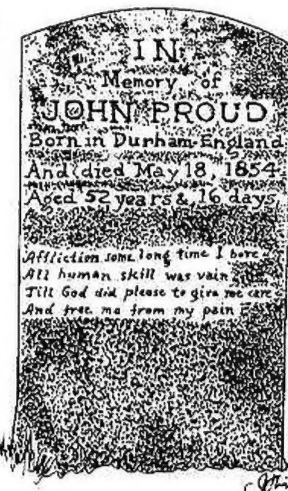


the Appalachian Trail. Nonhunters should be encouraged to visit and witness the diversity of wildlife that exists here. Areas properly managed for hunting should be showcased for the nonhunting populace. Hunters, of course, should conduct themselves as amicable hosts.

One day I decided to have lunch with the General. It's not what you think, let me explain. My truck was parked in the Cold Spring parking area and the Cold Spring Trail was chosen as the route for the appointed meeting.

Cold Spring Trail began life as a wagon track over Sharp Mountain. The old road is steep and it switches back on the ascent, lessening the grade as it climbs Sharp Mountain. Most of the road is severely eroded and some areas are inundated after rain. A section of the old wagon track had been coarsely paved with conglomer-

**RAUSCH
GAP
VILLAGE**



ate and sandstone boulders. Laborers of another era had laid these stones to prevent erosion. More than a century later, I view their handiwork and the preserved pathway. Long ago, men used this road to earn a living. Today, I hike this road for recreation.

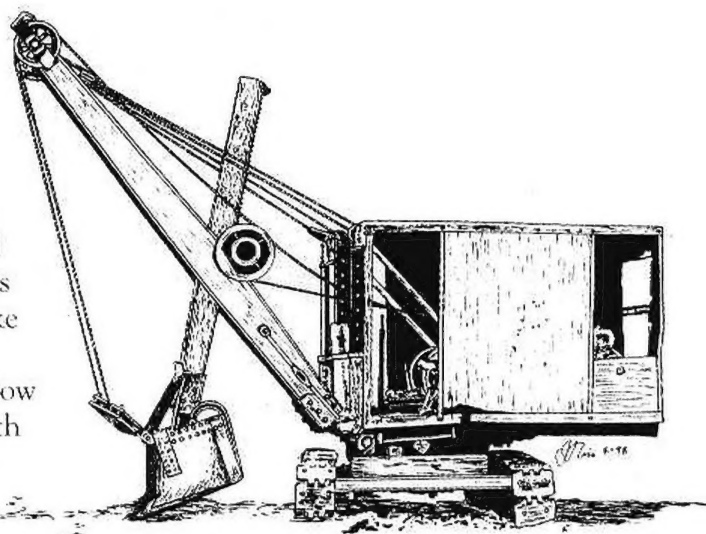
Nailed to the trees are old yellow metal trail markers, covered with black paint to hide the scars. We have evolved from blazing the trees with an axe, to the commonly accepted standard of marking the trails with paint. Faint blue paint blazes can be seen, increasing in number nearer the summit.

Cold Spring Trail ends at the Appalachian Trail on the north side of Sharp Mountain. A short walk west on the AT is the intersection of the Sandy Spring Trail. A turkey vulture circles overhead; I know he's watching me. "Not today," I say firmly, "the General is waiting."

Proceeding north on the Sandy Spring Trail, I cross Rausch Creek on the boulders to the left and continue toward Stony Mountain. As I ascend the southern flank of Stony Mountain, a well defined trail departs to the left. Two signs, old and new, direct me to the General from the Sandy Spring Trail. The trail is not marked, but well used and easily followed.

The shallow valley between Sharp and Stony mountains is a syncline, a trough of stratified rock. The beds of coal are deep within the trough underfoot and resemble a contorted letter "U," surfacing on the south flank of Stony Mountain. There on the south flank at the end of the trail is the General, beside his last work. The hand crank is still there, but the old Sterling engine will not turn over. Manufactured by the now nonexistent General Shovel Company decades ago, the General lies in state in Anton's Wilderness.

Over the past 250 years much has taken place in Anton's Wilderness, but today it stands in many respects like it had for thousands of years, a place where nature holds sway, a place where man can only visit and behold the raw beauty of our natural world. □



The Game Commission began buying land in 1920, and today owns 293 tracts totaling nearly 1.4 million acres. Although hunting license revenues — not general tax dollars — are used to buy and manage state game lands, hiking, photography, nature study, horseback riding, bicycling and other outdoor activities are also permitted, provided those activities don't interfere with wildlife or management activities. Overnight camping is prohibited, except for provisions made to accommodate backpackers on the Appalachian Trail.

Most years, in mid-October, the Game Commission opens the Stony Creek access road for a motor vehicle tour of this area. Watch *Game News* or local newspapers for details. A map of SGL 211 would be helpful for exploring Anton's Wilderness. Order yours from the PGC, Dept. MS, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Maps cost 94 cents plus 6% sales tax.